P-Southerland, David
Org: SALT (UCRs)

'Verification' may snag SALT pact

Loss of posts in Iran makes senators wary

By Daniel Southerland
Staff correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

Washington

The question of verifying Soviet compliance is emerging as the major issue at dispute for many Senate critics of a new SALT agreement.

The most obvious reason for Senate concern over the verification issue has been the recent loss of two American electronic listening posts in northern Iran.

After initially indicating to the press that the loss of the US intelligence sites in Iran did not create severe problems, Carter administration officials have changed their tune. They now acknowledge that they are seeking new methods to monitor Soviet missile tests and thus make up for the losses suffered as a result of the revolution in Iran.

But lurking behind the technical problems is a widespread feeling in the Senate that the Soviets cannot be trusted and that every effort should be made to hold them accountable for any violation of the SALT II treaty, now close to completion.

Also in the background, as far as some senators are concerned, is a feeling of less than full confidence in the Carter administration's foreign policy record. This translates into a fear of loopholes in the SALT agreement.

Some arms control specialists say they fear that the entire SALT debate may become mired in simplistic arguments over verification. Those who defend the SALT treaty argue that verification provisions are the easiest for Senate critics to attack and the most difficult for the administration to defend. They also note that verification is clearly the easiest of the many complex SALT issues for the public to understand and that enhances its value to any senator who is interested in making points in the SALT debate.

"It's actually the *only* issue that the public will understand," said one congressional staff specialist on arms control.

The Senator who seems to have the administration most concerned at the moment is John Glenn (D) of Ohio. For some time, Senator Glenn has concentrated on the verification issue, particularly as it pertains to Soviet testing of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). In a speech April 7, the Senator created considerable controversy by questioning the ability of the United States to monitor the new SALT agreement.

The administration, meanwhile, has let it be known that it is considering stopgap methods to verify Russia's compliance until it can develop a new generation of satellites for the interception of Soviet test signals.

One such method now under consideration would be to fly a modified version of the U-2 spy plane along the Soviet Union's southwestern border. Questions have been raised, however, as to whether any nearby countries would permit U2s to be based on their territory for such purposes.

Sen. Barry Goldwater (R) of Arizona said April 16 that such modified U-2s and other stopgap measures "won't begin to compensate" for the loss of the Iranian listening posts.

An aide to Senator Glenn said the Senator was waiting to see if the proposed solutions to make up for the lost listening posts in Iran would work technically. The U-2 proposal is similar to one made by Senator Glenn.

Voices now are being heard from all sides on the verification issue.

William E. Colby, former director of the US Central Intelligence Agency, in an article published April 15 in the Washington Star, makes a detailed case for the ability of the administration to verify Soviet compliance with the SALT pact.

A former analyst for the CIA has at the same time charged that President Nixon and Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger were deceived by the Russians in the first SALT agreement and allowed loopholes which permitted an expansion of Soviet nuclear weaponry.

The current CIA director, Stansfield Turner, has carefully avoided making any overall judgment, in public at least, on the verification issue. In an appearance recently before the Overseas Writers Association, Admiral Turner said he will limit himself to giving the Senate an estimate of the US ability to monitor Soviet compliance with each provision of the SALT treaty on a separate basis. He said so many provisions are subject to checking that it is meaningless to ask the intelligence agency whether the treaty as a whole is verifiable. That judgment, he said, must ultimately be made by the President and Congress.